THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) During the meeting between Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Japan on November 29,2004 at the ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Laos, the two leaders agreed to establish a Joint Study Group to undertake a comprehensive review of economic and commercial links between India and Japan and give its recommendations on further expansion of those links.

(b) No such proposal is under consideration at present.

(c) The modalities for the establichment of the Joint Study Group are under discussion with the Japanese government.

Visit of New Zealand's Prime Minister to India

2279. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNALAFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the New Zealand Prime Minister visited New Delhi in October, this year;

(b) if so, whether she indicated her country's support to India's stand on international terrorism;

(c) what was her stand about the Kashmir issue and the continuing talks between India and Pakistan; and

(d) the details of the agreements or understandings reached during her visit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand paid a State Visit to India from 16 to 20 October, 2004.

(b) During discussions, the Prime Minister noted the commonality of interests between New Zealand and India on international terrorism.

(c) The Prime Minister of New Zealand positively assessed the ongoing talks between India and Pakistan. The issue of Kashmir was not touched upon.

(d) No agreements were signed during the visit.

Support of China and other countries for seat in Security Council

2280. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has lately indicated its intention to support India's claim for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council;

(b) whether New Zealand's Prime Minister during her recent visit to New Delhi also indicated her country's support to India's claim; and

(c) which of the 'P-5' and other countries have so far indicated their support for India's claim?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) During his recent visit to India in October 2004, China's State Councillor Mr. Tang Jiaxuan noted that China supports a bigger role for India in the international community, including in the United Nations Security Council. The Chinese side has also conveyed that priority should be given to enhancing the representation of developing countries as part of the reform of the UN Security Council.

(b) New Zealand has not articulated any position on India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

(c) Among the permanent members, France, the Russian Federation, and the UK have expressed support for India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Several other countries have openly expressed support for India's candidature either in the UN or in the context of bilateral exchanges. Such support is expressed in different forums and forms and it is, therefore, difficult to give a definitive number of countries which have specifically supported India.

Rail link between New Delhi and Hanoi

2281. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the technical feasibility study for the proposed rail connectivity between New Delhi and Hanoi, agreed during the 3rd Ministerial